

A Soldier Reporter's Account of Siberia

CAPT. FREDERICK F. MOORE, a former newspaper man, spent six months as a Captain in the intelligence department with the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, travelled 10,000 miles through that country, and has written a book telling what he saw and giving conclusions he arrived at. He is not an admirer of Bolshevism and not especially hopeful of the future there. Of the Siberian peasants he says:

"My feeling was that they will never live to see things bettered, no matter how long they may live. There may be less disorder of a kind, but I doubt if these people will ever escape being exploited till they have acquired a leaven of education. To educate them, in the sense we define education, means to change their whole mental attitude toward themselves, their country and life in general."

He has this criticism to make of the American attitude in Siberia:

"I object to heads in our Government who lack decision as to what should be done and resort to chicane in attending to disagreeable tasks. I object to an expedition being sent into a country, the hands of the commander apparently tied, and yet demanding that certain results be attained in a left handed manner so that the responsibility may be shifted to other shoulders."

Capt. Moore gives a matter of fact account of his daily experiences, of the things he saw and heard. After looking at matters through his eyes to the extent of 333 interesting pages, one is inclined to agree with him that the prospect for orderly, well regulated life in Siberia is not brilliant at present. The peasants are almost unbelievably ignorant; in many respects life is on a mediæval level. Educated Russians Capt. Moore talked with told him the mass of the people in Siberia were far better off under the autocratic rule of the Czar's bureaucrats, although they agreed that was bad enough. The ultimate outcome is something the Captain doesn't care to hazard a guess about.

H. A. F.

SIBERIA TODAY. By FREDERICK F. MOORE. D. Appleton & Co.

THE Scribners have a letter from John Galsworthy, saying that he has been having a vacation (here's betting he said "a holiday") in France and Spain before going to London for the production of a new play of his. In February the Scribners will publish *Tatterdemalion*, a new book of his sketches and stories.

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A Chat With St. John Ervine.

By PERCY WAXMAN.

THE author of *John Ferguson* is one of the most engaging personalities among the younger writers of Great Britain. Without actually resembling him, he continually reminds one of Francis Hackett—although, he it said, Ervine and Hackett are on opposite sides of the Irish political picket. Ervine is about 36, rather solidly built, of medium height, with Titian hair worn slightly pompadour. It has a perfectly wonderful natural wave. His voice has the charm all cultivated Irish voices possess. When he arrives on the lecture platform in this country Americans will see one of the most modest and sincere of the noted Irishmen of the day.

He is entirely free from swank, with his dynamic straightforward, keen mind. Enlisting with the Irish Fusiliers in the early days of the war, he lost a leg in France, and the day I met him it was the first time he had ever tried to use his artificial leg.

"This thing comes damned hard on me," he confided, "because my chief recreations were walking and swimming." I asked him how he came to write *John Ferguson*.

"I did that," he replied, "in the first days of the war, before I joined up. I had read the papers so much that I became fed up with war news. Like every one else in those days, I bought up every edition of every little sheet that came pouring out from the presses and I got so despondent over the news that I made up my mind that I'd go crazy if I didn't force myself to do something to turn my thoughts into other channels. So I set to work and wrote *John Ferguson*."

"When it was completed I sent it off to the directors of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. They had done several other things of mine—mostly one act plays. I can't tell you why I did it, or what prompted me, but I offered the play on such stiff terms that I felt certain they'd refuse them. I suppose I was feeling arrogant or warlike or something when I fixed the terms, but anyhow the thing that I feared came upon me and back came my play. Just about that time Sir George Alexander wrote to me to do a play for him, and only half seriously I sent him *John Ferguson*. Imagine my surprise when I heard that he had accepted it and would play the title role himself! Picture Alexander, the handsome, well dressed, drawing room lover, the beau ideal of the afternoon tea school of comedy—picture him as John Ferguson."

"My good friend Bernard Fagan, the playwright-producer-author, immediately he heard that Alexander was going to do *John Ferguson*, dashed off to him to dissuade him from his foolhardy venture. Fagan so thoroughly convinced Alexander it couldn't succeed that the play came back to me, and when I asked Fagan what kind of a friend he thought he was he told me that he knew Alexander couldn't succeed in it, that the play wasn't his sort, and so on. Well, I was disappointed, of course, but a little later on a repertory company in Liverpool asked permission to play *John Ferguson* for a limited engagement and down there it proved what I had always believed it would prove—a success!"

"I then persuaded Sir George Alexander to go from Manchester to Liverpool to see the play and he was so delighted with its possibilities that he decided to do it in London. In the middle of his preparations poor Alexander died and back came *John Ferguson* to me."

"Then I went off to war and thought no more of the play until some time late in 1918, when I was having a holiday in an obscure fishing village down in Devonshire. I received a cable from the Theatre Guild of New York signed Langner, asking my permission to do *John Ferguson*. I had no notion in the world who Langner was and I had never heard of the Theatre Guild, so I asked Bernard Shaw (a good friend of mine) if he knew anything about them. He didn't. Then my agent said 'cable for an advance of 200 pounds and see what they say!' I did so and back came a cable saying it couldn't be done. Shaw then advised me to take a chance, and as I was anxious to see the play produced in New York I consented to do it on a royalty basis without any advance."

"Well, shortly after that huge checks began to arrive week after week and little by little I heard the details of its New York reception and, honestly, I am not down to earth yet. As soon as *Abraham Lincoln's* run is concluded over here they're going to do *John Ferguson*."

"You know I am going over to America

in January to lecture and I am wild to see how they are doing *John Ferguson*. It'll be on the road then, of course. I have just completed a new play that will be produced here soon. It's a dramatization of Wells's book, *The Wonderful Visit*. Wells likes it but thinks it should be altered here and there; I told him that what he wants is a dramatization of the book as he would write it to-day, and what I did was to dramatize the book he wrote and published."

"What did you think of *Abraham Lincoln*? Isn't it a wonderful play? Wells told me he saw it twice and wept both times. Drinkwater is a marvel."

In talking of his books Ervine said that *Changing Winds* was his biggest success, but that it wasn't his best book, in his opinion. He liked Mrs. Martin's *Man* much better, but the public evidently had not agreed with him. In answer to a question he said, laughing:

"No, sir, I am not a Sinn Feiner and I'm not a Carsonite. Both factions hate me. I am an Irishman but not a hater of England. I see her errors but also, her attempts to repair them and I won't wallow in the past for any one. The Sinn Feiners—but why spoil a friendly visit with Irish politics? Here comes tea. I hope you are accustomed to margarine with your bread, little sugar, and thin milk."

A Singer's Memories

IN her *Memories of a Musical Career*

Clara Kathleen Rogers, formerly an opera singer and long a resident of Boston, has brought together material which possesses the charm of personality. She has written in a pleasant, gossip style of her experiences in her profession, and introduces many interesting items about persons once famous in the operatic world, such as Kellogg, Lucea, Brignoli, Max Maretzek and Wachtel. The book should be interesting not only to musicians but to those older operagoers to whom the persons mentioned are more than mere names. W. J. HENDERSON.

MEMORIES OF A MUSICAL CAREER. By CLARA KATHLEEN ROGERS. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Murders First, Then a Genuine Mystery

THE details of murder mysteries have a fascination for many and many a reader of fiction, and Isabel Ostrander's story, *Ashes to Ashes*, is one of the best of the type we have read in a month of Sundays. It is quite different from the ordinary detective yarn in that everything is unfolded chronologically and is viewed through the eyes of the man who first strikes down a loving and devoted wife in a fit of jealous rage and afterward succumbs to sudden temptation and slays a former college friend who chances into his power with a considerable sum of money.

The body is tossed over the wall on Riverside Drive, and then *Naxos* Storm, in sheer bravado, makes a bet that the police will find neither the murderer nor the stolen money. Storm has had many prototypes in real life. They have usually come to the same end that he came to. No matter how astute one may be in seeking to destroy all possible evidence of guilt, the number of murders which forever remain mysteries is absurdly small in comparison with the total number committed. Trifling details which lead to eventual detection are almost invariably overlooked by the murderers. It would be unkind to those who relish unusual stories of crime to tell beforehand what these oversights are in Miss Ostrander's book. If Storm could have sat down calmly and have checked them up doubtless he might have done better. But he couldn't do that—they never can—and so but one outcome was possible.

Ashes to Ashes is a story which moves with the rush of a mountain stream in springtime, and it holds one's interest to the very last sentence. It is told with a plausibility and an absence of hysterics which make it all the more welcome to those who have been surfeited with the trash too often masquerading nowadays in the habiliments of the detective story.

H. A. F.

ASHES TO ASHES. By ISABEL OSTRANDER. Robert M. McBride & Co.

LOGAN GRANT McPHERSON'S new book, *The Flow of Value*, delayed from September by the pressmen's and binders' strike, is announced by the Century Company.

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Slippy McGee

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THIS is that utterly delightful love story of the South for which a Boston man with weak eyes, having heard it read to him, paid \$900 to have a single copy printed in larger type so that he could read it with his own eyes. It has the kind of charm that made "Daddy Long-Legs" famous. (A Century book. Price \$1.75. At all book-stores.)

"A Woman Named Smith," the author's latest novel of the South, is in the same rich vein as "Slippy McGee." Price \$1.75 at all book-stores.